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**AIR WAR COLLEGE**

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**BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA: THE FIRST  
OF THE LITTLE WARS**

by

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**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY**

**IN**

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**REQUIREMENT**

**MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA**

**APRIL 1994**

In 1991, a secessionist revolt and prolonged ethnic fighting began to push Yugoslavia into the final crisis of its turbulent history. Yugoslavia was comprised of six republics—Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia— and two provinces—Vojvodina and Kosovo (see Chart 1). From the country's inception in 1918, Yugoslav history has been marked by continual tension between Serbian efforts to dominate a centrally controlled state and other groups' attempts to assert their autonomy in a looser political structure. The worst fighting has taken place in Bosnia-Herzegovina, (subsequently referred to as Bosnia) where Bosnian Serbs, with material support from Serbia, have seized approximately 70% of the republic's territory. This "land grab" has been accompanied by brutal Serbian "ethnic cleansing" campaigns against the Bosnian Muslims and according to a 31 Jul 93 *NY Times* article, nearly 200,000 civilian casualties including victims of detention camps, mass rape, and children dying from lack of medical supplies.(1:1) Additionally, more than two million people are homeless which equals numbers seen in WWII. These homeless civilians are flooding into nearby Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro, and are putting a significant drain on these already war-weary economies.(2:3)

United States' policy regarding this crisis has changed several times. Initially, the United States looked at the Bosnia problem as one that should be handled by the European Community (EC), especially since Yugoslavia is in the center of its territory. According to U.S. Secretary of State Christopher, in support of our national interest, the "main aspect of our policy [regarding Bosnia] is humanitarian relief, to the extent we can provide it."( 3:61) With the passage of time and reflecting the frustration of the world community regarding the West's apparent inability to help resolve the issue, US perspectives changed. On 9 August 1993, NATO voted unanimously to approve a detailed operational plan for the use of air strikes in Bosnia.(4:566) With this decision, the alliance, with the full support of the United States, signaled the international community they would not accept the continued strangulation of cities, bombardment of civilians, rape and dehumanization of citizens, or the denial of humanitarian assistance to people in need. President Clinton has made it clear he wants to do something in Bosnia, but the precise definition of his goals have not been articulated. The US has fully supported all political and diplomatic efforts to resolve peace in the Balkans, and with the 9 Aug NATO

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vote, showed willingness to become much more directly involved. This vote signaled a change but proved to be another paper tiger as no action was ever taken regardless of the atrocities committed by the warring factions against the Bosnian Muslims. Finally, in a televised speech from the Oval Office on 12 February 1994, President Clinton issued a 20 February 1994 joint UN/NATO deadline, ramrodded through by the US, demanding the withdrawal of all heavy weapons, primarily Serb artillery, from around Sarajevo or face NATO airstrikes(5:2) What are the objectives of US involvement and why should the US risk the lives of its servicemen in this conflict?

This paper will analyze the history of the Balkans, focusing on the former Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and examine the diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious makeup which have contributed to the recent civil war. Next, I'll analyze the basic tenets of the major peace proposals for the conflict. Then, using the framework of Crowl's six questions, I'll review the role of US involvement, focusing specifically on the use of airstrikes, both in its current context and what future roles may be suitable for the military. Finally, since this conflict continues today, I'll present an update on the current situation.

## **BACKGROUND-YUGOSLAVIA**

Following World War II, Bosnia was reincorporated into Communist Yugoslavia as one of the country's six federal republics. Joseph Tito was the leader of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) throughout the postwar era until his death in 1980. Ostensibly a federation of eight republics which included two provinces, Tito's regime was highly centralized, with all the real power concentrated in his hands. The republics were comprised of Serbs, Croats, Bosnian Muslims, Slovenes, Albanians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Hungarians, and Yugoslavs. Major religious affiliations included Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Islam. Most Serbs, Montenegrins, and Macedonians were Orthodox Christians, totaling 43% of the population. Slovenes and Croats were Roman Catholic, claiming 30%, while the Muslims of Bosnia and the Albanian areas number about 14%. The remainder of the population either did not claim religious affiliation or adhered to the atheism once favored by the government. (6:175) The main nationalist contention arises from the Serbians with their inferior position in Yugoslavia's eight-unit federation. By far the largest single ethnic group in the country, the 1974

Constitution gave the Serbs only a one-eighth share of power in the Federal Government and LCY. This inequitable share of power was deliberately contrived by Tito, who believed that a politically weak Serbia was a prerequisite for a strong Yugoslavia (7:16). To make matters worse, Serbia's territory was reduced by the creation of the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo—*de facto* republics under the 1974 Constitution—to maintain relative parity in area between Croatia and Serbia.

Tito exercised his power to the fullest, and at times ruthlessly, seemingly required because of the ethnic diversity of the country. By 1947, Tito had effectively crushed all opposition to his regime through reputed mass shootings, forced death marches and concentration camps administered by his state Security Services.(7:16) Throughout his tenure, Tito used these security forces as required to calm any unrest which could reduce the power of his regime.

Unlike nearly all other Communist parties in postwar Eastern Europe, the LCY did not depend on Soviet military and economic support for its position of leadership. Tito's reluctance to follow Soviet advice and resistance to Soviet exploitation incensed Stalin, who expelled Yugoslavia from the Communist block in 1948. After a tense period, the party leadership came to grips with its communist country without Soviet sponsorship. Tito gradually improved relations with the Western countries, sought friends in the Third World, and eventually adopted a policy of nonalignment between East and West. Tito's regime survived and grew based upon his use of the security forces, abandonment of collectivization, and extensive Western political support and economic support.

After Tito's death in 1980, the prestige and power of the central government began to weaken, as no other leader was able to resurrect the infrastructure which Tito so effectively used to lead Yugoslavia. Further, Tito's failure to create appropriate political machinery for resolving nationalist and ethnic conflict intensified problems stemming from the diverse levels of economic development in Yugoslavia's republics and a generally low level of political institutionalization.(8:152) Tito was replaced by a collective presidency, with a member from each of the six republics and two provinces.

Another factor contributing to the breakup of Yugoslavia was the elimination of the USSR as a main stabilizing force in the region. Without the defining struggle between communism and democracy, countries like Yugoslavia were vulnerable to the "more traditional enemies of civilization" such as expansionism and ultranationalism.(9:1) The Croats and Slovenes, in particular, demanded greater

autonomy in economic policy because they were the richest republics and had grown tired of supporting the rest of Yugoslavia. By 1990, both republics had developed strong separatist movements.(6:176) Further, deteriorating economic conditions, especially rapidly disintegrating living standards, cheapened the benefits of sustaining the Yugoslav state and stimulated the rise of nationalism and interethnic hostilities. When Serbia's Communist leader, Slobodan Milosevic, opposed plans for a new less centralized union, Slovenia and Croatia unilaterally declared their independence in June 1991. Croatia's Serbian minority, which opposed independence, rose in revolt against the Croatian government, and the Serbian-led army moved in to support them. By the time a UN-imposed truce ended the fighting in January 1992, about one-quarter of Croatia was under Serbian control.

Aptly citing the change from a bipolar world as a major contributor to the region's crisis, a Yugoslav author said "history has not ended; only that great master of discipline, the cold war, has taken a bow. The little wars have just begun.(10:29)

### **BACKGROUND-BOSNIA**

After World War II, Bosnia became a republic within Partisan leader Tito's new Yugoslav federation and, like the other Yugoslav republics, gained wide-ranging autonomy as a result of a 1974 Constitution that greatly decentralized power in the federation. The population of Bosnia-Herzegovina has always been an ethnic potpourri, and by 1991, it consisted mainly of Muslims (44%), Serbs (31%), and Croats (17%).(11:1) In many areas of Bosnia, there was no single ethnic majority. In the larger cities, civilians may have constituted approximately 20-25% of nonethnic "Yugoslavs." Thus the pattern of ethnic settlement in Bosnia was highly complex. No ethnic leadership could advance exclusionary nationalist ambitions on behalf of its ethnic constituency without alienating vast portions of the population—including substantial numbers of its own group who had adopted the multiethnic civic culture associated with "Yugoslavism." Further complicating the issue, the Tito regime officially recognized Bosnia's Muslim Slavs as a nationality, rather than as a religious group. This was done in an attempt to put to rest arguments about their alleged Croat or Serb origins which had been used to justify Serbian and Croatian territorial claims on Bosnia.(11:4).

When Slovenia and Croatia declared independence in June 1991, which touched off fighting in the two northern republics, Bosnia's government did not take sides. Nonetheless, the fighting in Croatia between Serb and Croats increased nationalist tensions between Greater Serbian and Greater Croatian factions in Bosnia. From September to November 1991, the Serbian Democratic Party declared several Serbian autonomous regions within Bosnia, which would secede from the republic if the republic declared its independence from Yugoslavia. Some of these regions had Serbian majorities, while others had relatively few Serbs but were strategically located between the Serb majority areas and Serbia itself.

In December 1991, Bosnia applied to the European Community for recognition as an independent state in response to an EC deadline for such requests from Yugoslav republics. In a bid to secure EC support, Bosnia held a referendum on independence on 29 Feb - 1 Mar 92. Independence was approved by 99.4% of those participating in the ballot, and voter turnout was 63.4%. (11:4) Most Serbs boycotted the vote, and Serbian leaders in the republic warned that international diplomatic recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina by the EC would lead to civil war in the republic.

Ethnic Serbs launched attacks throughout the republic on 4 April supported by the Yugoslavian army. Fighting intensified after the EC recognition was extended to Bosnia on 6 April. On 7 April, Serbs proclaimed an independent "Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina." Serb forces quickly seized about two-thirds of the republic's territory, rapidly conquering ethnically mixed regions and Muslim-majority areas in central and eastern Bosnia.

### **CAUSES OF THE BALKAN CIVIL WAR**

The causes for the resultant civil war within Bosnia are many, but a root cause can be traced to the reciprocal fears that existed within Bosnia's ethnic groups; on the eve of the conflict, each group feared the domination by others. (12:20) For the Muslims, the prior secession of Croatia and Slovenia had left them, in effect, as members of a Greater Serbia, and they understandably feared Muslim interests would suffer badly in a smaller Yugoslavia dominated by the Serbs. Further, the Muslims generally favored an independent Bosnia with a strong central government ruled by a multiethnic coalition because they were poorly armed, lacked the protection of an external sponsor, and had suffered most from Serb atrocities. As the largest and most diffusely settled ethnic group in the country as a whole, they would also have the

most power under such an arrangement. For them, independence appeared as the only escape from this ugly nightmare.

For the Serbs, as part of Yugoslavia, their interests would be secure. As a minority in a Bosnian state dominated by the Muslims, however, they foresaw a repetition of the discrimination they had suffered in the province of Kosovo during the 1980s. In Kosovo, which the Serbs view as the "cradle " of their nation, the population is 80% ethnic Albanians. In the early part of the decade, nationalist demonstrations by the Albanians broke out against the Serbs. The decade saw almost continuous and often violent confrontations in the province between Serbs and Albanians. This violence against the Serbs contributed to the growth of nationalist sentiment among Serbs in Serbia and the other republics of Yugoslavia. The Serbs were the strongest supporters of cantonization. In their views, Bosnia should become a confederation of three, ethnically based, largely independent states.(13:366)

The Croats wanted out of Yugoslavia for the same reason the Muslims did, and wanted out of Bosnia for reasons similar to the Serbs. The Croatian community, unlike the Muslims, was more divided about its goals in the current struggle. Moderate Croats in the republic favored a united Bosnia. More nationalistic Croats favored the creation of a Croatian canton with wide-ranging autonomy from the Bosnia government and close links with Croatia.(14:6)

Taken altogether, the attitudes of these three major ethnic groups meant that a majority of the population in Bosnia was opposed to the creation of this new state. The incompatibility of their respective interests explains why war was a likely outcome of Bosnia's secession from Yugoslavia. "The bottomline is that civil war in Bosnia is being fought over territory. The participants are nationalists obsessed with turf, from the peasant armed to protect his village, to the leaders of the petty fiefdoms scattered around the republic, to the national party leaders themselves." (15:42)

### **U.S. POLICY IN THE BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA CONFLICT**

The United States initially considered the issue in the former Yugoslavia to be primarily an European concern and left the lead role in the area to the EC. The US involvement in DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM also distracted attention from the developing crisis. Nonetheless, the US recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina on 7 April, the day after the EC. This recognition was given when Bosnia was on



the brink of full-scale war. The Western countries had hoped recognition would head off the civil war by bolstering the Sarajevo government and deterring the Serbian extremists. Although this recognition provided some legitimation to the newly-declared Bosnia government, it failed to provide it any solvency. The US had hoped that through recognition by the world community, the Serbs would rethink their aggressive actions and stop fighting. Further, it can be argued that instead of slowing or halting the war, recognition had apparently accelerated the pace of Bosnia's destruction based upon the Serb's warnings. Seeing the reality of an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina despite their rejection of it, recognition spurred further military action by the Serbs. The Serbs felt if their incorporation into Bosnia could not be prevented by voting, it would be done by force, preferably with large territorial gains. Another major impact from the formal recognition of Bosnia was the transformation of a civil war into an interstate conflict with the creation of new boundaries. Yet, emotionally, the war remained a civil war, fought primarily by people who had been citizens of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia in Yugoslavia, and who were thus supposedly citizens of the new state even as they rejected it.

The Administrations of both Presidents Bush and Clinton have vigorously criticized Serbian militias for seizing large areas of the republic, for its policy of "ethnic cleansing", and the governments of Serbia and Montenegro for providing massive assistance to these efforts. The US has delivered food, medicine, and other humanitarian supplies to Bosnia and has sent plane loads of additional aid via Sarajevo airport since the airport was taken over by the UN in June 92. The US supported the idea of UN land convoys for humanitarian aid to Sarajevo and other areas of the republic. The US has also strongly supported Security Council Resolution 770, which authorized the use of all necessary means to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In October 1992, the UN passed Security Council Resolution 781, which banned military flights over Bosnia in order to make humanitarian relief flights safer and stop the Serbs from using their aircraft in the war. The resolution, however, did not include any enforcement measures, a fact "deplored by the Bosnian government."(11:11) In April 1993, however, the North Atlantic Council agreed to enforce a much-ignored UN ban on fixed-wing flights over Bosnia. NATO began OPERATION DENY FLIGHT on 12 April 1993 with USAF and USN providing the first alliance aircraft. This operation ultimately resulted in the downing of four Serbian aircraft as described in the update on the current situation.(12:20)

The US has also favored exerting diplomatic and economic pressure on Serbia and Montenegro to end their support to the Serb militias in Bosnia. On 16 November 1992, the US supported UN Security Council Resolution 787, which created a naval blockading force.(11:11) On 26 Apr 93, the US supported the imposition of economic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro, primarily to put pressure on Serbia to pressure the Bosnian Serbs to sign the proposed peace initiative. The sanctions have been devastating on the economy of Serbia, where inflation runs out of control and shortages are widespread.(13:735) Additionally, the sanctions have divided the country, with the younger, better educated populace siding with the urbanites to pressure the Serbian government to eliminate support for the Bosnian Serbs.

The US has been reluctant to sanction the use of force to solve the underlying conflict, or the use of ground troops for any purpose. On 1 July 92, Secretary Baker, echoing the concerns of other Administration officials, cautioned that US involvement in the war would have "real quagmire potential" and said the introduction of US ground troops would be "quite unlikely."(11:11) In fact, the US has stated that unless all parties agreed to implement a cease-fire, US ground troops would not be inserted.(3:62) The US fears these troops might have to transition from a peacekeeping role to a peacemaking role, or else we could withdraw the troops and let the negotiated settlement fall through.

Bosnian government officials have repeatedly asked the US to neutralize the heavy artillery and aircraft in the hands of the Serbian militias, a request the US has thus far refused.(15:367) They have also asked the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims be lifted. While the West has thus far not been responsive to this request, Islamic countries, led by Turkey and Iran, outraged by Serb atrocities against Muslims and what they see as a weak Western response, strongly support a lifting of the arms embargo on the Bosnia government forces. This feeling was endorsed by a senior Muslim member of Air War College Class of 1994 who said the West's inaction is due to fundamental racism because the West does not want an Islamic-led nation to exist in its midst. As a result, he postulated the West is content not only to stand by passively and allow them to be exterminated, but contribute to the Bosnian Muslim's plight by withholding armaments vitally needed to resist.

Russia's traditional ties to Serbia as historic allies and fellow Orthodox Slavs have also influenced U.S. policy, "effectively paralyzing or delaying forceful action in several instances." (15:355) Russian

President Boris Yeltsin needed to protect himself against claims by nationalist opponents that he was too quickly bending to Western demands to abandon Russian support for Serbian interests. In fact, support for the Serbs became a rallying cry for Russian hard-liners who gained significant influence in parliamentary elections in December 1993. They cited Bosnia as an example of the government's failure to pursue a tougher foreign policy. Since we see President Yeltsin as our best hope to bring stability to Russia, it was in the best interests of the US and Western community to support and understand his domestic challenges.

Two other countries, Greece and Turkey, also enter into the equation. Greece has promised military support to Serbia, just when it is about to assume the presidency of the EC. This activity contrasts Turkey, its long-standing rival, who strongly backs the Bosnian Muslims. (16:5)

The US has numerous national interests in the Bosnian conflict, whether clearly articulated by the administration or not. These interests include the unity of NATO, the stability of eastern Europe, and the continued cooperation of moderate Islamic nations like Turkey and Egypt. Morally, the fighting in Bosnia has produced the worst outrages since the Holocaust.

## **PEACE INITIATIVES**

The war in Bosnia has claimed over 200,000 lives and created over two million refugees during its nearly two year duration. The war reflects the inability of the West—the US, the Europeans, the UN, the EC—to bring a satisfactory diplomatic settlement to the region. All the main actors have repeatedly tried to introduce proposals for peace; however, without the support of all three warring factions and with the misguidance of the main actors themselves, none have successfully reached the implementation stage.

Yugoslavia began to rapidly disintegrate in late 1991 with the partitioning of the Serbs into their own autonomous provinces, and the Muslims and Croats forming their own Bosnian Parliament against the wishes of the Serbs. The EC saw these actions leading to war. The EC therefore negotiated the first major settlement of the crisis known as the "Statement of Principles for new constitutional arrangements for Bosnia." (19:2) This plan had the potential to satisfy all parties by preserving Bosnia, at least officially, while maintaining the independence of the Croats from any central government in their cantons. On March 18, 1992, during EC-sponsored talks, representatives of the three ethnic groups

agreed in principle on a plan to divide Bosnia into three ethnically based cantons, which would have wide-ranging autonomy within the republic with a weak central government. The US reputedly convinced the Bosnian president to reject this proposal, saying the Muslims might get a better deal if they backed out of this proposal which would have given them 44 percent of the country's territory, with roughly 82 percent of the Muslim population coming under Bosnian administrative control. The US was still trying to maintain the territorial sovereignty of Yugoslavia, thus not encouraging any worldwide ethnic revolt to gain independence by seceding. The US, however, shortly violated this principle when it recognized Bosnia as an independent state from Yugoslavia. This position was primarily aimed at preventing added ethnic unrest in the former Soviet Union. "United States' policy makers have since admitted their errors in opposing partition of the country in 1992, since after more than a year and a half of war, the latest peace plan would give the Muslims only 30 percent, the Serbs 52 percent (down from the 70 percent under their military control), and the Croats 18 percent of the devastated territory of Bosnia." (15:368) Accepting this proposal would have provided more land to the Muslims than any subsequent peace plan and avoided the death and destruction which has made the Muslims the big losers in this crisis. In the end, the three sides were not able to agree on the crucial issues of the precise boundaries of the cantons, their powers relative to the federal government, or their relationship with neighboring Serbia and Croatia.

One of the main international forums concerning the former Yugoslavia grew out of an initial international conference held in London in August 1992 among the warring parties and about thirty other countries. The joint EC/UN conference was chaired by Lord David Owen, co-founder of the British Social Democratic Party, representing the EC, and former US Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, representing the UN Secretary General. (19:5) After months of consultations, in January 1993, the Vance-Owen plan surfaced, proposing a new constitutional and geographical structure for Bosnia. The proposed government was a vastly decentralized state made up of ten autonomous provinces, most with a majority of one of the three dominant ethnic groups. (See Chart 2) A collective presidency consisting of three members of each ethnic party would oversee a central government composed of a Prime Minister and eight other ministers. The central government would only administer foreign affairs, international commerce, and the determination of citizenship. All other powers were to be granted to

provincial governments with a constitutional court resolving any issues between the central government and provinces.

The delineation of ten provinces pleased the Croats since their three provinces were contingent to Croatia or to each other. The Serbs and the Muslims, conversely, gained territories tightly intertwined. The Muslims were reluctant to support the plan because they feared ethnic cleansing in each canton. The Muslims favored a united, independent, democratic, multi-ethnic Bosnia. The Serbs agreed with the constitutional principles but refused to sign the provincial map. The Serbs controlled nearly 70% of Bosnia and the new cantons would reduce their territory to only 43%. The US felt the plan was unjust because it ratified Serb gains through aggression and ethnic cleansing. Further, the US thought it would encourage further ethnic cleansing within cantons as minorities flee to another canton controlled by "their" ethnic group. Also, the US feared that cantonization would set a bad precedent for the former Soviet Union countries, spawning possible ethnic revolt. The plan was, however, supported by Britain, France, and Russia.

Enforcement of the Vance-Owen Plan would take as much negotiating among the major peacekeeping actors as would the peace plan among the warring parties. There were many major questions: what countries would supply troops and how many; who would command the troops, NATO or the UN; who would pay for the troops; would this plan be limited to peacekeeping or include some peacemaking? How long would they stay? The NATO ambassadors reportedly gave approval in principle to sending at least 50,000 troops to Bosnia if the plan was approved by all sides with the US contributing approximately one-half. (20:29)

The Bosnian Croats and Muslim-led government signed the plan but the Bosnian Serbs refused to do so. To increase the pressure on the Serbs to sign, the UN voted to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia, and NATO has been enforcing the ban since 12 April 1993. Additionally, the UN Security Council voted tighter sanctions against Yugoslavia, which went into effect on 26 Apr 93. On 2 May, the Bosnian Serb leader signed the plan, but the Bosnian Serb Parliament and populace subsequently rejected the plan based upon the belief they were not getting enough territory. Although not implemented, this plan would serve as the basis for most follow-on initiatives.

To counter the Security Council imposed arms embargo and the problems the US saw in the Vance-Owen plan, the US proposed a "lift and strike" option. The 25 September 1991 arms embargo was to stop the introduction of further weapons into the region, thereby reducing future bloodshed. This embargo was not effective against the Bosnian Serbs and Croats who received additional arms through sponsorship of Serbia and Croatia. Additionally, when the Yugoslav Army withdrew from the region, it left behind all of its heavy artillery which transferred to the Serbs. The Bosnian Muslims lacked outside sponsorship and were at a decided disadvantage because of the embargo. The US also brought this proposal forward to maintain the territorial integrity of Bosnia and to avoid rewarding the Serbs for their aggression. The US felt the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as a sovereign state and member of the UN, had a right to defend itself. Therefore, the US proposed lifting the embargo to even the disparity caused by the weapons freeze and to strike Serbian forces and artillery with US airpower.

The "lift and strike" proposal was rejected outright by the British and French. The British saw too many similarities with the on-going struggle in Northern Ireland. The French, who have 6,000 soldiers in Bosnia, the largest portion of ground troops in the UN peacekeeping force, felt their troops would become targets for Serbian snipers. Many critics thought additional arms would only increase the killing and produce strong pressures to escalate the air war. On the other hand, Islamic countries, led by Turkey and Iran, outraged by Serb atrocities against Muslims and what they see as a weak Western response, strongly support lifting the arms embargo on the Bosnian government forces. (6:9) This proposal created a rift between the US and two of its strongest allies. After the collapse of this proposal, both President Clinton who had said that the US does have "fundamental interests" at stake in Bosnia, and Secretary of State Christopher began to describe Bosnia as a civil rather than an international conflict. The crisis fell from the headlines.

In July 1993, the UN/EC proposed a follow-on to the Vance-Owen Plan. This plan divided Bosnia into three republics under a loose union, redrew the map of Bosnia with areas under the control of the three ethnic groups delineated, specified military agreements for the withdrawal of weaponry as well as a cease fire, and an agreement that Sarajevo would be a UN protectorate for two years. (13:734) The plan

was accepted by the Bosnian Muslim President but rejected by the Bosnian parliament in Sarajevo on 29 September.

In November 1993, the EC proposed a last major peace plan to lift sanctions against the Serbs which had been in place since May 1992. This plan proposed lifting the sanctions if a peace treaty were signed and the Serbs withdrew from 3-4 percent of the land won from the Muslims. The Bosnian Serbs did not accept this proposal and felt the issues that should be addressed were not percentages of land but access to the sea and control of Sarajevo.(21:1A) The US did not support this plan as long as the fighting persisted in Serb-held areas of Croatia. Further, this US lack of support also reflected the stress resulting from the British and French failure to support the US proposed "lift and strike" plan.(22:1)

### **CROWL'S STRATEGIC QUESTIONS**

The war has continued for 21 months with few visible signs of near-term cessation. This, despite multiple diplomatic, political, economic, and limited military initiatives to bring peace to the area. As stated in the introduction, the US supported a UN plan for airstrikes in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Focusing specifically on this instrument of national power as a resource to meet the objective of bringing peace to the conflict, I'll frame the discussion of employing airstrikes within the context of Crowl's strategic questions, a routine which should be followed by any military planner.(23:2)

### **WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?**

Crowl's first question asks "what specific national interests and policy objectives are to be served by the proposed military action." ( 23:4) President Bush's National Security Strategy of the United States lists four national security interests and objectives the United States aspires to achieve in its vision of the new world order. The first of these is to seek "global and regional stability which encourages peaceful change and progress." ( 24:3 ) This objective includes working to avoid conflict by reducing regional instability and violence. The United States has a national interest in the area since Bosnia lies alongside the established and emerging market democracies of Europe. Additionally, with the deep-rooted cultural differences found in the region, the Bosnian conflict can easily explode into a much wider Balkan conflict which has already once been the flashpoint for starting a world war. In a 23 September 1993 speech to the National Defense University, the US United Nations representative said

"the possibility remains the war in former Yugoslavia will spread to neighboring regions and nations, swelling further the flow of refugees, straining the economic vigor of Europe, and threatening the security of key European allies." (25:666) Further, peace is essential in the area because the war is exacerbating the existing tension between Christian and Moslem states. As stated earlier, since the majority of those suffering in Bosnia are Moslems, Western reluctance to intervene reinforces a widely held view in the Islamic countries that the West in general is anti-Moslem. The worst-case result could be possible intervention by Moslem states themselves to correct this perceived lack of support. The second objective listed is the support for

open, democratic and representative political systems worldwide. ...We should foster open and democratic systems that secure human rights and respect for every citizen, and work to strengthen respect for international norms of conduct. The active promotion of increased political participation, especially now in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, is in our national interest. ...Democracies also ensure individual civil and human rights, support economic freedom, and promote stability.(24:3)

The fighting in Bosnia is a humanitarian tragedy, especially with the "ethnic cleansing" and mass rapes practiced by the Serbs against the Muslims. As Milovan Djilas, a former vice-president of Yugoslavia stated in *World Press Review*, "Unless a strong peace agreement is endorsed by those with the capacity to enforce it, the war of extermination in Bosnia will last for decades. It will spread, reach into the edifice of the UN, and dash to the ground the principles of human rights and the international laws of war."(26:14) In today's climate, where the threat of world war seems reduced but ripe for regional, ethnic based conflicts, our failure to engage tacitly approves this gross violation of human rights. Other countries with equal ethnic diversity will see the U.S. tolerating this situation and feel comfortable with pursuing their own version of ethnic purification or another form of genocide. As summarized in *Forbes*

Unless the Allies intervene effectively, the situation will encourage all those forces antithetical to democracy and pluralism. It will demonstrate that aggression pays off, that murdering civilians will go unpunished. The repercussions won't be confined to the Balkans region. The war there is encouraging ugly nationalist excesses in the former Soviet Union. It is generating streams of refugees, straining the social fabric of Western Europe.(78:26)

Bosnia-Herzegovina is a member state of the United Nations. By establishing diplomatic relations with Bosnia and allowing its admission to the United Nations, we recognized it with all the legitimacy and rights to survival common throughout the contemporary world. If we cannot make collective security work for Bosnia, there is no reason to suppose we could make it work for any other country in Europe or



anywhere else. Zbigniew Brzezinski, former President Carter's National Security Advisor, summed up the frustration many have with the US position regarding Bosnia when he said

there have been times in the past when I have disagreed with American foreign policy. This is the first time in my life when I'm ashamed of it. . . We could have stopped that war [in Bosnia] had we been more decisive. . . The consequence of [US inaction] politically is the progressive demoralization of western Europe. I don't think we should underestimate the destructive consequence of the Bosnian tragedy . . . It is undermining movement towards European unity. It is destroying the self-confidence of the Western democracies. It is, I think, revealing a degree of moral decadence [that] is very dismaying and ominous. (28:35)

Based upon the stated national objectives of global and regional stability, and our desire for the preservation of human rights for all, the US must do what it can to develop a peaceful solution to the ethnic and nationalistic tensions in Bosnia. The US needs to offer its global leadership to this situation and remind the world that it can act as a force for good.

#### **DOES THE MILITARY STRATEGY MEET THE NATIONAL POLITICAL OBJECTIVES?**

This question establishes a correlation between the political ends of the war and the military means used to achieve those ends. If the US decides to engage in the conflict using only airstrikes, will this limited military effort in a civil war with the aggressor employing guerrilla tactics significantly influence the conflict's outcome?

The US and NATO allies have significant airpower in the area to engage in a large-scale combined air campaign. The US has staging bases in Italy and has an aircraft carrier stationed in the Adriatic Sea; NATO forces can employ from bases in Germany or France, or from their own carriers. The use of airpower alone would show military resolve and yet keep the NATO forces from entering into a ground-based quagmire. But what will the military planners target? The main targets in this conflict would be the heavy artillery, armored vehicles, and supply routes. With good targeting data and precise weapons, the first wave of airstrikes could eliminate a good portion of the targets with little threat of collateral damage. After the first wave of attacks, however, the remaining pieces would be dispersed and concealed. In this guerrilla warfare environment, the infantry would be lightly armed using mortars as a "heavy" artillery weapon in combination with rocket propelled grenades and larger caliber machine guns; airstrikes would be ineffective against these types of targets. The US and NATO must also remember that guerrilla warfare is not new to the Serbs. Today's Serbian fighters are descendants of a

people who fought valiantly in World War II and effectively tied down multiple German Axis divisions using classic guerrilla tactics.(7:15) With this heritage, airstrikes could prove to be no more effective than they were in Vietnam against suspected truck parks or supply points in the jungle.

Rather than enter into a guerrilla warfare environment from the air, we could employ an overwhelming strategy of massive firepower like we did in Bagdad. We could target Serbia and take out power plants, electricity grids, airports, trunk convoys in strategic attacks. The result of such a campaign would certainly hurt Serbia, but it probably would not stop the bloodshed as administered by local warlords with the help of ample supplies of assault rifles and mortars. If the airstrikes targeted Serb enclaves to destroy their morale or will to fight, our experience from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam tells us that the enemy would only become more determined and its morale not adversely impacted by the airstrikes. Maj Gen Mike Ryan, HQ USAF, testified before Congress and predicted that if the allies used airstrikes alone, the Serbs "would just ride it out." (20:30) If we decided to get more deeply involved and commit ground troops, Lt Gen McCaffrey, the Special Assistant to the then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, speculated "that ending the violence in Bosnia would take around 400,000 troops deployed for a year or so." (29:24) After establishing peace in the region, the UN would have to maintain peacekeeping troops in the area indefinitely to ensure the solidity of the solution. The US. portion of such a unit would be about 25,000 troops. (29:25) Without the total commitment required of inserting ground troops, the use of only limited means such as airstrikes in this conflict would fall short of even limited objectives because our will to stay and fight does not equate to the deep-seated animosities of the warring factions.

#### **WHAT ARE THE LIMITS OF MILITARY POWER (AIRSTRIKES)?**

During testimony about the effectiveness of airstrikes before the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on defense, Gen McPeak said "we can attack artillery positions, interdict supplies and take a variety of coercive actions which I think would have some impact on Serbian operations." (30:22) He was, however, careful to point out that while military objectives could be achieved, "he was not sure that airstrikes would stop the ethnic violence and keep it from spreading to other areas." (30:22) Additionally, the topography of Bosnia complicates the airstrike option, with mountainous terrain and low weather

ceilings making visual acquisition of already hard-to-see targets such as artillery pieces even more difficult.

In other congressional testimony, Marine Corps General John Sheehan said U.S. reconnaissance can "clearly locate only about a quarter of the Serbs' 600 artillery pieces. To destroy even those guns with some degree of predictability requires people on the ground to identify targets." (20: 30) Airstrikes can't destroy what they can't find. If we want greater lethality and accuracy, we'll have to commit ground troops to be our eyes on the target, to pinpoint the targets with highly accurate navigation coordinates or to even laser designate a target. With dense forest, however, the fighters would seldom be able to see the designator's laser spot. Committing ground troops for this task would greatly change the risk for other ground peacekeeping forces in the region. Would the result be worth the risk?

There are clearly limits to what airstrikes can achieve in Bosnia. To pursue this option effectively with the support of the nation, the Administration would have to clearly define their limited objectives of the airstrikes and how this employment of US forces furthered our national interests.

#### **WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES?**

The announced use of UN supported airstrikes on 9 August showed a frustration with the continued fighting despite endless political, diplomatic, and economic attempts to peacefully conclude the conflict. Unfortunately, without the solid support of the French and British governments who feared airstrikes would put their troops serving as part of the UN forces in harm's way of snipers' bullets, the threat of airstrikes was empty. What other approaches can the US. take to resolve this issue?

- a. Take no action, and rely on the EC to solve the problem in its own backyard. This summarizes fairly well what the US. has done through January 1994. Opponents of any expanded US role in stopping the fighting in Bosnia say the end of the Cold War has reduced Yugoslavia's strategic significance to the US. Critics compare the crisis to Lebanon and Northern Ireland, where deeply-rooted ethnic and religious conflicts are not amenable to military solutions.
- b. Aggressively pursue the lifting of the arms embargo imposed on Bosnia. The US proposed lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnians to allow the sovereign state to defend itself and to counter the disparity of arms created by the embargo in favor of the Serbs.( 31: 563) This proposal enjoyed little support since security of weapons delivery to the Bosnians was questioned

and in the bigger picture, increasing the arms available to the area would probably only increase the numbers of casualties by stepping up the tempo of the conflict.

c. Reininvigorate diplomatic solutions to the conflict. Several proposals have surfaced such as the EC's plan of developing three ethnic-based cantons which could eventually lead to secession to the greater Serbian and Croatian states. Additionally, the Vance-Owen plan which provided 10 ethnic areas under a loose federal government is another viable option.

The US. needs to lead the effort, especially diplomatically, by developing a consensus UN approach and convincing the warring factions that diplomacy and not fighting will resolve this crisis. It must also lead the effort, which will certainly be long-term, to commit ground troops for monitoring and enforcing any peace resolutions.

### **HOW STRONG IS THE HOMEFRONT?**

Most Americans probably remember Sarajevo vaguely as the peaceful, idyllic, placid setting of the 1984 Winter Olympics in the heart of Yugoslavia. Without this framework, most Americans would be unable to relate to the area. In light of this framework and the vivid video shown on hourly news reports showing the continual shelling of the countryside and cities, and the extreme civilian casualties, a May 1993 *NewsWeek* poll showed the country nearly evenly split when asked whether the fighting in Bosnia was America's problem: 49% thought it was not and 44% thought it was.(29:25) Since then, however, with the failure of diplomatic efforts and lack of support by the Allies for the US-sponsored lifting of the arms embargo against the Bosnians and for use of airstrikes against the Serbs, the issue of Bosnia has slipped from the headlines. Additionally, with the killing of American troops in Somalia, the dragging of soldiers' corpses through the streets, and a helicopter pilot detained as a POW, the American people flash back to Vietnam and are reluctant to become more involved in a far away land. "Originally regarded by the Clinton administration as a war in which attitudes toward collective security and genocide were at stake, the Bosnian conflict has since been downgraded by [SECSTATE] Christopher to an ugly ethnic struggle of little importance to America's national interest." (32:1) The Administration has put Bosnia on the back burner since it hasn't been able to obtain a foreign policy victory which it so

badly needs. Without the Administration 'selling' the importance of this conflict to the American people as one of national interest, the home front will resist putting any additional resources on the line.

### **ARE WE PAYING ATTENTION TO PAST LESSONS?**

Does today's strategy overlook points of difference and exaggerate points of likeness between past and present? Has concern over past successes and failures developed into a neurotic fixation that blinds the strategist to changed circumstances requiring new and different responses? Using Vietnam and the Gulf War as two recent tactical aviation benchmarks, we must be careful in applying specific lessons learned toward the Bosnian conflict. We were successful in the Gulf War for various reasons, several involving improved technology such as stealth, precision weapons, and improved command and control, which supported our evolving doctrine. Other reasons for our success were more related to the unique environment of the threat, the leadership, the region's geography, and the tactics in which the war was fought. Although some of the lessons learned can be transferred, the war in Bosnia is more closely related to our Vietnam experience. "Western military planners are confronted with the unappealing prospect of needing large numbers of troops, of keeping them in place for a long time, and of losing the lives of many soldiers. As the United States learned in Vietnam, it is not always easy to know in advance whether the amount of pain necessary to get a determined opponent to submit can be exerted at a cost acceptable back home." (15:355) We need to closely evaluate how we can use our improved technology in a Vietnam environment of guerrilla warfare fought in wooded, mountainous terrain. The greatest lesson to be learned from both experiences, however, is that before we commit to any military involvement in Bosnia, we must carefully articulate the objectives of our involvement so we can develop an appropriate strategy.

### **WHAT HAVE I OVERLOOKED?**

The previous strategic questions will help the military planner determine the feasibility and options of employing military force in Bosnia. There are several other questions, however, based upon the unique circumstances of this conflict that must also be addressed before we can commit forces. Among these questions are the following:

(1) If we should get involved militarily, are our interests better served unilaterally or in conjunction with UN forces? As pointed out earlier, the Administration has backed off in claiming Bosnia is vital to our national interests. The American public will not support unilateral action at this time without clearly stated interests to the US, so our involvement will inevitably be combined. If we rely on the UN, do we foresee future security council membership allowing us to continue to get involved in peacekeeping operations that we support, or will our reliance on UN sponsorship preclude our future involvement in other regions of the world?

(2) If the US pursues a combined policy of operating under the UN umbrella, what policy implications does that have for regional organizations like NATO? Can we effectively mesh the strength of both organizations to better meet our goals such as working within the UN for diplomatic and economic strategies and peacekeeping, while using the NATO umbrella in a peacemaking role?

(3) The US possesses a significant level of technological capability in the airpower arena not possessed by our allies. Can the US commit airpower only, lending its technological edge to the battle, and let other coalition countries contribute ground troops who are more on a par with US Army forces to prevent us from being drawn into a possible quagmire?

(4) Does the US possess the armed forces to support the Bosnian conflict which is not a major regional conflict as outlined in the *Bottom Up Review* and still be viable in supporting other contingencies such as a build-up or outbreak in Korea? We still have nearly 3,000 air force personnel and associated aircraft deployed in support of Southern Watch (SW) and Provide Comfort (PC). In how many different sub-MRCs can we get involved before our national strategy is over committed? If we commit air assets in support of Bosnia concurrent with SW/PC, our capability to support only one MRC is suspect and could provide North Korea a window of opportunity, albeit brief, to invade the Republic of Korea.

(5) Is the role of world leader synonymous with world cop? How does the US differentiate between regions to determine if we should get involved?

## **UPDATE ON THE CURRENT SITUATION**

On 5 February 1994, a Serbian mortar attack on a Sarajevo market area killed 68 civilians.(5:20)  
This single act ignited a rapid set of diplomatic and military events focused on bringing peace to the

region. On February 9, the NATO council authorized Admiral Boorda as commander of Allied Forces Southern Europe to mount air strikes at UN request against artillery or mortar positions around Sarajevo responsible for attacks on civilians.(12:20) It also set the 1 a.m. Monday, Sarajevo time, 21 February, as the deadline in coordination with the UN.

On 12 February 1994, President Clinton issued an ultimatum requiring the Serbs to pull back their tanks and artillery to beyond a 12 mile exclusion zone around Sarajevo or else the NATO threat of airstrikes would be realized. President Clinton defended his decision by citing the US national interests as "preventing a broader European conflict, preserving NATO's credibility, checking the destabilizing tide of refugees and halting the strangulation of Sarajevo." (5:20) Apparently, with the proper catalyst and hopes of a united coalition to back up earlier NATO/UN threatened military actions, the Bosnian conflict had finally grown from its "ugly ethnic struggle of little importance to America's national interest" as earlier characterized by SecState Christopher. (32:1)

Unexpected support which solidified the peace ultimatum came from Russian President Yeltsin who inserted 400 Russian troops around Sarajevo and convinced the Bosnian Serbs to withdraw from the capitol city.(33:A-6) If NATO had launched an airstrike to enforce the ultimatum to remove the weapons on the Bosnian Serbs, a traditional Russian ally, Yeltsin's political future would have been questionable. His initiative to insert troops bolstered his position as a world peacemaker, especially in this region where he has a direct interest. Amid political upheaval on the Russian domestic front, the "Russians are redefining their world role by emphasizing the positives they can bring to the table." (34:14) Their peacemaking role spared NATO the task of bombing the Serb artillery and for that, President Clinton said that he was encouraged by the willingness of the Russians to work with us to bring the Serbs into a final peace agreement. (35:18) If both the Russians and the US can continue this complimentary approach to diplomacy and military affairs, maybe the Bosnian crisis can serve as some sort of a blueprint for resolving future regional conflicts.

Just as a tentative peace calms Sarajevo, the demands for increased US diplomatic and military involvement in Bosnia will likely only grow. The US and its allies will have to decide whether to extend the airstrike ultimatum to other besieged areas in Bosnia. Currently, UN peacekeeping forces are stretched and do not have enough personnel to support such a proposal. According to a 19 Feb New

York Times article quoting a senior US official, reaching a peace settlement would have a high US military cost attached. "Bosnia's Muslim-led government will never sign a peace settlement without solid security guarantees, foremost among them the promise of a large number of US ground troops. That is the cost of doing peace." (33:27) Without NATO troops to police any peace agreement, the likelihood of future violence seems high. If the US balks at sending in US ground troops, then other NATO countries may back out as well. For the US to commit troops, however, the President will have to succinctly articulate the need for the ground troops to a Congress that demands more participation in any military troop deployments, especially if there is risk to the American soldier.

On 28 February, two Ramstein AB F-16s flying out of Aviano, Italy, in support of Operation Deny Flight shot down four Yugoslav-built G-4 Super Galeb attack aircraft which were bombing a Bosnian Muslim weapons plant in gross violation of the NATO imposed no-fly zone. Worldwide response to the shootdown has been positive, even from the Russians. As reported during a press conference immediately following the shootdowns, Admiral Boorda, the NATO Commander for Southern Europe, said "If this is a test of our [NATO] resolve to enforce the no-fly zone, I guess we passed the quiz."

On 1 March, Bosnian Muslims and Croats agreed on the framework for establishment of a federation that could move Bosnia a significant step closer to peace. Brokered by the US, the agreement creates a federation of cantons made up of areas where the majority of the population is either Muslim or Croat. The proposal also calls for a confederation with Croatia that would include open borders and strong economic ties. For the Bosnians, linking the Bosnian and Croatian lands would be far more economically and politically viable than the remnant of territory the government seemed likely to control under earlier peace plans. The agreement also commits Croatia to guarantee Bosnian access to the Adriatic Sea, an economically vital point. (36 :1) For Croatia, the chief selling point for this proposal was the chance to become a real partner with the United States and Europe. (36:1) The administration hopes creation of this federation will increase pressure on the Serbs to join in a peace agreement that would finally end the fighting in the former Yugoslav republic.

It must be recognized, however, that several promising peace proposals have been brought to the bargaining table before and have failed. Without the total support of the military from each country's more extreme factions, this proposal may suffer the same fate.



## **CONCLUSION**

The civil war within the former Yugoslavia has its deep-seated roots in ethnic and religious differences which go back thousands of years. It is a conflict in which the Clinton Administration, elected on a domestic agenda, wanted to distance itself and defer the initiative to the European Community. Unfortunately, neither the EC nor any other regional coalition in Europe had the political and diplomatic means to bring an end to the conflict. The US was asked to take the lead in resolving the Bosnian crisis. For 22 months, however, the Administration false-started on several diplomatic and military initiatives, never achieving the momentum required to resolve the crisis.

The 5 February mortar attack killing 68 civilians crossed the moral threshold for President Clinton. His ultimatum to remove the Bosnian Serb heavy weapons expressed his outrage with the continued bloodshed. His threats to bomb the Serbians energized Russian President Yeltsin to insert Russian troops into Sarajevo which has proven to be the deciding factor in the tentative peace in the region. The Administration also took the diplomatic lead to bring the Bosnian Muslims and Croats to the bargaining table. With a signed agreement, however, President Clinton's problems are still far from over. He succeeded in uniting the international community, but now he must focus his efforts within the US; he must convince Congress and the American people to support deploying our fair share of troops, up to 25,000, to the region to maintain peace.

The President must also decide what to do if the Serbs continue fighting within the region. With the 28 Feb shutdown, NATO demonstrated its resolve to support the no-fly line in an air-to-air engagement. But if we must engage Bosnian Serb troops and weapons positions, the result will not be so clean. To avoid further military action, the President must continue to build upon the Russian involvement and use their strong influence over the Serbs to withdraw completely, thus increasing the chances for a lasting peace.

The US has firmly stood on its beliefs in humanitarian rights and territorial sovereignty. The world has again looked to the US to provide the leadership to defend the high principles on which this nation was founded. Through US initiative, a ceasefire is at hand; but without continued commitment, this peace will be short-lived like all those which have previously failed.

The Bosnian crisis may be an insight into what the rapidly changing geopolitical landscape will look like in the years to come. The major actors throughout the world will continue to look to the US as the strongest world power to provide the leadership to resolve upcoming crises. The American government has a unique responsibility for the collective security structures constructed in the wake of WWII. We planned them and vouched for them. We have a special stake in how this machinery functions. In the final analysis, however, it is our domestic president who must determine what the US involvement will be in worldwide future "little wars."

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Former Yugoslavia



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Chart 2

